

Interview #5

Informant: Mr. Norman Craig, Health Educator, Pan-American Sanitary

Bureau, Mexico, D. F.

Place: Baltimore Hotel, Los Angeles

Time: 11:00-12:00 A.M., Dec. 16, 1956

(m W.W. II)

N.C.: Doctors came in regularly and provided a clinic service. The  
tough cases were referred to specialists in nearby cities.  
service

H.A.: Were these Public Health/Physicians who came in?

N.C.: No, private practitioners whose services were contracted under  
the program. I must say that I blush as I look back on my  
ignorance of that time. I knew nothing about the folk medicine  
of Mexico, and so when these fellows came in with complaints  
that the doctors and I had never heard of, we could only con-  
clude they were either lazy or a little touched in the head.  
It ended with the doctors giving them colored aspirin for almost  
everything...

H.A.: Things like suencho, mal ojo...

N.C.: Yes, and bilis. Of course, the poor braceros were no happier  
about the whole thing than we were. They ended up, many of  
them, by going to practitioners in town who put on a little  
ceremony -- you know, "see your own heart and lungs working,"  
things like that. They had to pay for it out of their own  
pockets, but I guess it was more similar to what they were  
used to in their own culture.

H.A.: I'm glad you brought this up, because, actually, as I see it,  
folk medicine is the very heart of our study. Many other  
people, of course, have looked into Mexican folk medicine,  
but who hope to systematize it in a new way, slanted toward  
our practical problem.

N.C.: We are interested in the same thing in our Guernajato project.  
We want to learn how much health attitudes change while  
braceros are in the United States, whether they remain changed  
when they return to Mexico, and whether they serve as an  
instrument in changing the attitudes of others. I'm sure you  
are going to be of great assistance to us.

H.A.: Oh, I'm sure we'll gain at least as much from you.

N.C.: Health departments in Mexico, by the way, are now pretty thor-  
oughly committed to working certain appropriate elements from  
folk medicine into their programs. It was a long struggle to  
get the physicians down there and in Central America to see  
things our way, but I think we have that battle won now.

H.A.: The question now is whether we can persuade doctors and others  
here in this country to make similar changes.

N.C.: Yes, that's the problem. I wish you luck!

folk medicine